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# Fine

THE AMERICAN WINE MAGAZINE



Château Palmer 1870-2006 • Davos du Vin • Bordeaux 2003 • The pleasure of wine writing • Wreck Champagne

A N G E L O G A J A



# NAPA VALLEY



## CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2007 TASTING

### 1-30

Ranking		Points
1	Hourglass Blueline Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	95
2	Blankiet Estate 2007	94
3	Continuum 2007	93
4	Darioush Signature Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007	93
5	Bond Guella 2007	93
6	Colgin IX Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	93
7	Bond St. Eden 2007	93
8	Gargiulo 575 OVX Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	93
9	Dalla Valle Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	93
10	Bond Pluribus 2007	92
11	Harlan Estate 2007	92
12	Araujo Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	92
13	Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	92
14	Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	91
15	The Maiden 2007	91
16	Colgin Tychson Hill Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	91
17	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars S.L.V. Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2007	91
18	Dominus 2007	90
19	Pahlmeyer Proprietary Red 2007	90
20	Dalla Valle Maya 2007	90





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THE RESULTS OF THE TASTING

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Even though the equal quality of the wines that were tasted blind attracted our attention, there were several wines that attracted our particular attention and the results were certainly surprising. The most prestigious wines from Napa – namely Harlan and Screaming Eagle – were not at the top, but were much more reserved in nature than many of the more unknown names. Several of the 1st and 2nd growth Napa Valley wines FINE has tasted did not succeed as well as expected in the tasting. Along with Harlan and Screaming Eagle, Araujo Eisele Vineyard, Bryant Family's Cabernet Sauvignon and Dalla Valle's Maya did not meet expectations. There is no denying the potential of these wines, but on the day of the tasting they were refrained and even closed in parts, which is rather typical of these top quality wines when they are young. On the other hand, the surprises were definitely Hourglass's Bluevine Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Tim Mondavi's Continuum, Blankiet Estate and Darioush Signature Cabernet Sauvignon. The tasting of Gargiulo 575 OVX divided opinions, but when scored highly it was amongst the region's very best. It is also worth mentioning the Bond wines, which were successful overall; of particular note was Bond's newest wine, Guella, whose style charmed us. So-called traditional names, such as Opus One, Caymus Special Selection, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Joseph Phelps Insignia, were left in the background when compared to these 'new classics'.

After the tasting we were able to draw at least a one conclusion about the 2007 vintage: the wines are extremely balanced and exceptionally enjoyable already. They are also multilayered and have a sophisticated body. It can be estimated that they may even have an ageing potential of thirty years. ♣



# ”THE BEST NAPA CABERNET 2007”

– HOURGLASS BLUELINE VINEYARD



”THE BEST NAPA CABERNET 2007” – HOURGLASS BLUELINE VINEYARD  
HOURGLASS BLUELINE VINEYARD STOOD OUT AT THE EXTENSIVE 2007 NAPA CABERNET TASTING AS A CLEAR WINNER. IT EMPHATICALLY LEFT BEHIND THE HIGHLY RESPECTED FIRST AND SECOND GROWTHS OF NAPA VALLEY WITH ITS POLISHED, SMOOTH AND HARMONIOUS STYLE THAT IS PERFORMING SO WELL ALREADY.



## HOURGLASS BLUELINE VINEYARD CABERNET SAUVIGNON



### THE QUALITY OF THE WINE

“2007 was our second year with the BlueLine vineyard. A warmer vintage for us, we moved to open up the trellis systems to provide greater shade with a looser canopy. Fortunately, the Cabernet vines that were planted in 2001 had reasonably mature root systems by that point and weathered the heat spells relatively well with the opened up canopies. With excessively drained gravel soils, little air humidity and a warmer season, watering was a necessity. Though we watered a little more than we would in a cooler vintage, we are always watching the plants to maintain that razor-thin balance of stress-to-plant health, and watered only to counter the whims of Mother Nature through the heat spikes. For this wine we have harvested the Cabernet Sauvignons from two blocks planted on different clones – one in late

October and one in early November. The blocks were vinified separately and blended just before bottling. The ageing was done with 23 months in barrel, from which about 30 per cent were new French oak,” Jeff Smith comments.

According to Jeff, they will launch two other varietals, Merlot (350 cases) and Cabernet Franc (25 cases), from the BlueLine vineyards. “We have also planted Malbec and Petit Verdot and are considering other site-appropriate varietals, so we will have some fun components to play with over time,” he adds.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jeff and Carolyn Smith had made an old family estate in St Helena, established by Jeff’s father back in 1976, a success after replanting the miniscule four-acre property with Cabernet Sauvignon in 1992. Since its first Cabernet vintage in 1997, the Hourglass has been hailed as one of the rising stars in the region. Soon after the first Hourglass Estate vintage, the Smiths started to look for another top class vineyard in the area.

“We knew we could not replicate Hourglass, that wasn’t the point. The idea was to find a site that would express its own unique personality, and do so at the highest level, as the Hourglass vineyard has,” Carolyn Smith stresses.

After years of searching, the BlueLine vineyard ended up in the Smith’s hands accidentally.

MARKET PRICE  
USD 125



"It was on a Sunday drive up to Silverado Trail when I spotted the "For Sale" sign on the road just south of Calistoga. The property was situated in the mouth of Dutch Henry Canyon, on the eastern side of Napa Valley. Its contiguous neighbours include the world famous Switchback Ridge vineyard and Duckhorn's legendary Three Palms and Monitor Ledge vineyards are situated across the street. A quality post code to say the least!

"We were very excited to find out that it sits next to Switchback Ridge, which was our long time winemaker's Bob Foley project. We knew his knowledge of the area would give us a head start when it came to managing the vineyard and crafting the wines," Jeff explains.

Within minutes of walking on to the property, the Smiths knew it fitted their exact criteria and was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It was one of the most exciting vineyards they had seen. The 41-acre property was quickly purchased in 2006.

I walked through the property, all I could see were piles of rock taken out of the vineyard when it was planted. Additionally, this part of the valley is known for producing bold wines that we thought would be a powerful complement to the feline grace of Hourglass."

The alluvial, mineral rich but nutrient poor gravel soils produce engagingly bold wines with intoxicating perfumed aromatics and dense concentration.



#### PHILOSOPHY IN WINEMAKING

The winemaking philosophy relies strictly on terroir.

"The idea is that as Hourglass grows it will evolve from being a terroir-driven single vineyard wine, to a terroir-driven brand that encompasses several definitive estate wines. We want each property to be its own unique thing and express its own personality," Jeff Smith announces.



#### TERROIR

The vineyard is at the confluence of two important watersheds that connect at the western tip of the vineyard. The two streams that form the property are known as the Blue Line Streams, a term used by the Californian Department of Fish & Game to describe sensitive watersheds, and this then became the name of the property – The Blueline Vineyard. As Jeff explains:

"For thousands of years these streams have fishtailed back and forth creating the well-draining rock and gravel beds that are the underpinning of the soil structure on which the vineyard is planted. When

**Owners:** Jeff & Carolyn Smith  
**Founded:** originally in 1976, but in its current form since 1992  
**First Vintage:** 2006 (Hourglass Blueline), 1997 (Hourglass)  
**Location:** Dutch Henry Canyon, south of Calistoga  
**Vineyard size:** 41 acres  
**Average age of vines:** 6 years in 2007  
**Production:** 600-800 cases  
**Vineyard management:** Kelly Maher (viticulturist), Josh Clark (vineyard manager)  
**Winemaker:** Bob Foley